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64th plenary meeting
Friday, 17 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Odlum (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 23

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/697 and Add.1)

Note by the Secretariat (A/50/271)

The Acting President: In addition to the report (A/50/697 and Add.1) of the Secretary-General, a note by the Secretariat transmitting the report of the Chairman of the consultative process on prospective new modalities for funding operational activities for development has been circulated in document A/50/271.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovikia, have endorsed the content of my statement.

Of all the items on the agenda of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, the subject under consideration today is one of the most important in the context of international cooperation for development. The changes of the last decade in economic and political conditions and new consensuses reached during the recent series of conferences offer a unique opportunity to develop an intensified, strengthened and more realistic approach to such cooperation, but the opportunity may go to waste if we fail to shape a more efficient, creative and forward-looking United Nations.

If the Organization's performance is held down by such factors as overlapping and duplication of work, limited responsiveness and lack of transparency and accountability, the United Nations system will not be able to secure the level of support needed for it to realize its full potential.

The European Union believes that there are compelling reasons for reforming the United Nations system, particularly in the economic, social and related fields, so that it can meet the growing challenges of a complex and interdependent world, preserve its relevance in that world and make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development.

The adoption of resolution 48/162 by consensus two years ago was a substantial step forward in the process of reform in the economic, social and related spheres of the United Nations system. This process is intimately linked to the wider, ongoing process of reform and, in particular, to the elaboration of "An Agenda for Development".

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The European Union believes that the basic framework established by resolution 48/162 remains valid. At the same time, the process of reviewing that important resolution provides a suitable opportunity at this stage to focus the practical ideas for enhancing, in particular, the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

As is recalled in resolution 48/162, the General Assembly is the main forum where Governments pursue the development dialogue in a political context, oriented towards taking an integrated view of matters pertaining to the economic, social and related fields in order to build and deepen the political understanding required for enhanced international development cooperation.

Yet, in reality, the proliferation of items on the agenda, together with their vertical, short-term approach, causes us to lose sight of priorities and prevents the General Assembly from achieving an integrated and dynamic vision of development. The review of resolution 48/162 offers an opportunity to introduce more effective working methods.

In this regard, we believe that better use should be made of the forum offered by the General Assembly to address issues that would otherwise be the subject of international conferences, including through special sessions of the General Assembly. In addition, consistency between the Second and Third Committees and complementarity in their work should be enhanced through, for example, period meetings between their Bureaus and joint meetings of the two Committees, especially in the follow-up to conferences relevant to both of them. Lastly, a clearer relationship should be established between these two Committees and the Fifth Committee in order to achieve a better understanding of the interlinkages between policy, funding and the setting of priorities.

The working methods of the Second Committee should be improved. Suggestions for improvement include the holding of consultations under the aegis of the Bureau well ahead of the opening of the subsequent session so that agreement can be reached on the programme of work, which is a provision of resolution 48/162 that, regrettably, has never been put into practice. Strict time limits for statements, the timely issuance of reports in all official languages, greater use of decisions, and fewer, shorter and, where appropriate, omnibus resolutions could all have an impact on the efficiency of the Second Committee in its functions.

Moreover, simple ways of selecting a principal theme or themes in order to focus the substantive debate under each cluster of the agenda should be explored, thus allowing for more dialogue based on an integrated approach to development issues. The clusters in the Committee's agenda should be revised with a view to improved rationalization. The European Union will submit concrete proposals in this regard.

The working methods of the Third Committee also need some adjustments so as to reflect the more integrated approach to social development and gender issues that came out of the Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences. A more comprehensive approach to debates and more integrated reporting on social development and the advancement of women should be promoted. The use of omnibus resolutions, where appropriate, should be encouraged and the issuance of timely documentation should be ensured.

Reporting is an area that needs improvements. A more integrated system of reporting should be envisaged. We suggest that the Secretary-General should submit reports that integrate other reports, excepting those emanating from subsidiary bodies, under each cluster of the Second Committee's agenda in order to stimulate policy dialogue. Such integrating reports should contain a concise analytical section, a clear identification of policy issues and, wherever possible, recommendations for decisions.

The Economic and Social Council, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, must continue to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for coordinating the policies and activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and for supervising its subsidiary bodies, in particular its functional commissions. It should provide policy guidance to the United Nations development system and promote a coordinated and integrated follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields held in recent years.

We believe that, without prejudice to the current institutional arrangements of duration and venue of the substantive session, consideration could be given to regularizing the holding of short sessions throughout the year, in accordance with the Charter's provisions relative to the Council, including sessions to address critical developments and/or specific issues in the economic, social, environmental and human rights fields. These

sessions would also allow for dialogue with the chairpersons and secretariats of the functional commissions, other subsidiary and related bodies and relevant executive boards, as appropriate, in order, among other things, to identify problems, avoid overlaps and fill institutional gaps. The expanded Bureau of the Council could play an active role in preparing these meetings.

Recognizing the importance of transparency, the expanded Bureau could play a role in, among other things, identifying emerging issues and main trends for consideration by the Council, assessing the need for the short sessions and preparing them. Bearing in mind the positive experience of recent years, we need to draw upon the lessons we have learned regarding the efficient management of the Council. The Bureau should have proper knowledge, leadership and the ability to carry out all the managerial and organizational tasks needed to improve the credibility and performance of the Council.

It should be ensured that the various segments of the Council enjoy complementarity and do not unnecessarily duplicate each other's work. This is a critical factor for improving its efficiency. The European Union presented, in the framework of the Working Group on An Agenda for Development, specific proposals for the improvement of each of the segments. We believe that these proposals could be reiterated with some minor adjustments in the framework of the review of resolution 48/162.

In this respect, we believe that the high-level segment needs to be improved through better selection and preparation of its subjects, a joint report by the relevant parts of the Secretariat, increased integration of the policy dialogue with the heads of international financial and trade institutions and more substantial conclusions. In this context, agreed conclusions should be adopted when a follow-up is required.

The coordination segment can be considerably improved through expeditious and effective implementation of the agreed conclusions of this year's substantive session on coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields.

The operational-activities segment is performing in a reasonably satisfactory manner, particularly at the working-group level, although practical steps, such as those proposed by the European Union, could be taken to enhance its capacity. Better preparation is needed for its high-level part so as to encourage more ministerial participation. We believe that the Council should play a strengthened role in the triennial policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations system.

The primary function of the general segment should be to review the activities of the Council's subsidiary bodies. The provisions of the agreed conclusions of this year's substantive session are especially relevant in respect of the division of labour among the functional commissions and coordination between their programmes of work, which should be ensured by the Council.

For the Council, the contents of the relevant parts of the agreed conclusions of 1995 are very important for the issuance of reports. Some other possibilities mentioned in the Secretary-General's report could also be explored.

Resolution 48/162 established a system for the governance of the United Nations development funds and programmes that constitutes a substantial improvement over the previous situation. We consider that more time is needed to efficiently develop to the fullest the work of the current institutional arrangements. Improvements in the Secretariat structures are also needed. A critical review of the present structure of the Secretariat and functioning of its various departments should be undertaken.

The fundamental problem of funding the operational development activities of the United Nations system is linked to the role that Member States expect the United Nations to play in the field of development, and this should be examined in parallel with the ongoing reform of United Nations development programmes and agencies.

Some major issues that should be considered in the discussion of new modalities for funding include the question of resource flows and their predictability. In this context, the European Union wishes to reaffirm its commitment to reaching the official- development-assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. The European Union stresses the need for the efficient use of resources for development, evaluations of resource requirements, and precise information of operational costs, as well as the joint responsibility of all countries for the funding of operational activities and a broader distribution of the burden of funding.

We are ready to participate in the discussions on all aspects of funding and all the options mentioned in the reports of the Secretary-General, and we look forward to

an early resumption of the discussions of the Working Group on new funding modalities.

The European Union reaffirms its strong interest in the review process that we are to undertake and its commitment to enter into negotiations with all delegations in a constructive spirit. We look forward to reaching a consensus in this process before the end of this year.

Ms. Ramiro-Lopez (Philippines): At the outset, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/50/697) on this subject.

The Group of 77 and China, in fulfilling our work on this issue, reaffirm the principles on restructuring as stated in resolutions 45/264 and 48/162. Although paragraphs 37 and 38 of annex I of the latter resolution provide the particular terms of reference for our work on this subject, we believe that the ultimate objective of our exercise should be to contribute to strengthening the mandate of the United Nations in development and economic matters, and restoring these matters to the centre of the United Nations agenda. Indeed, the United Nations remains the only international organization capable of dealing with development issues in an integrated manner. Hence, the capacity of the United Nations and its various bodies to undertake analytical and policy-oriented work and to recommend appropriate action in the economic and social fields must be strengthened.

In connection with the particular exercise at hand, namely, the follow-up to implementation of resolution 48/162, the Group of 77 and China wish to highlight the following issues for consideration.

The Group of 77 and China note with concern that two years after the adoption of resolution 48/162 the

> "need for a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries" *(resolution 48/162, para. 32)*

has not been met. It is even more disturbing inasmuch as this need was recognized in paragraph 32 to be

> "part of the overall reform process".

Although much time and effort has been spent over the past year on exploring new funding modalities for the core funds and programmes, progress has not been achieved. In fact, as far as the Group of 77 and China are concerned, the fundamental problem remains the continuing decrease in the level of core resources available to the agencies, funds and United Nations programmes, and the lack of political commitment to address this issue in a positive manner.

Moreover, we subscribe entirely to the view of the Secretary-General's view that any funding mechanism by itself cannot determine the total flow of resources. Nor is the level of resources primarily determined by any given funding mechanism, unless accompanied by the requisite political will to ensure an adequate level of resources.

In addition, we note the increasing trend in some donor countries to limit the scope of the funds' and programmes' activities, priorities and resources to a category of countries, at the expense of the large majority of developing countries, thus challenging the universal character of these programmes, which has been reaffirmed many times by the General Assembly.

The General Assembly, under paragraph 1 of Article 13 of the United Nations Charter, is mandated to exercise leadership in the promotion of international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational and health fields. This is further specified in more detail in Chapters IX and X of the Charter. It is the supreme policy-making body of the United Nations in the social and economic fields. It is also the principal forum where all Governments pursue the development dialogue in its political context. In recognition of this vital role of the General Assembly, we should continue to work towards its effective functioning and strengthening, and find ways to improve its working methods. The absence of such commitment may not lead towards fulfilment of the role in the economic and social fields as envisioned in the United Nations Charter.

This notwithstanding, the Group of 77 and China believe certain changes in working methods could lead to improvements in the conduct of the Assembly's work in the economic, social and related fields, particularly with regard to the consideration of substantive issues. More precise and detailed proposals will be made by the Group on this matter at the appropriate time.

Furthermore, we believe there is a need to examine the present clustering of items in the agenda of the Second Committee, as reflected in resolution 48/162, as well as the most effective means to consider issues of a cross-sectoral nature, such as the follow-up of the

implementation of various international conferences. We also believe that the timing of the general debate of the Committees should be examined in a manner that would allow for the possibility for delegations to incorporate appropriate elements arising from the plenary general debate.

The Group of 77 and China believe that a number of issues pertaining to working methods of the Economic and Social Council should be examined in the framework of General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, with a view to enabling the Council to exercise fully the role envisioned for it in the United Nations Charter, especially that of policy coordination.

We therefore believe that a number of improvements could be made in the conduct of work of the various segments of the Council. For example, the policy dialogue of the high-level segment could be enhanced through the furnishing of special reports and studies by the financial and trade institutions concerned, as envisaged in resolution 48/162. The nature and form of the outcome of this segment might also be examined, especially in terms of achieving a more definitive outcome to facilitate follow-up action. We also believe that similar matters, including those relating to working methods, outcomes and enhanced follow-ups, should be considered with regard to the coordination and operational activities segments, and we intend to provide specific suggestions on these matters when we consider them in more detail.

Regarding the general segment, we strongly believe that it should be more action-oriented. In our view, this could be achieved through, among other things, an improved or enhanced reporting system by the functional commissions and other bodies reporting to the Council, so as to enable the general segment to focus on actions needed to be taken by the Council.

While acknowledging a slight improvement in the working methods of the reduced governing bodies of the funds and programmes, and after an assessment of the functioning of these governing bodies, several developing countries have, nevertheless, met real difficulties in participating effectively in these bodies. These difficulties have principally been caused by the proliferation of formal and informal meetings of the same bodies throughout the year, and by the lack of a clear division of labour between the agendas of the annual session and the regular meetings. This has resulted in the perception that the relevance of the annual session has diminished.

The Group of 77 and China are also of the view that the meetings of the Boards should also avoid competing with other meetings of the General Assembly, inasmuch as the present situation of overlapping meetings adds an additional strain to delegations. The content of the reports of the Boards to the Council should also be reviewed.

Finally, on this specific issue, the creation of a separate executive board for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), especially in the light of its role in the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, should be considered.

Another issue which could be examined in the context of the follow-up to resolution 48/162 is the relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the subsidiary machinery. In this connection, a principal task of the Council should be to ensure harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions by providing clear policy guidelines to them so as to enhance coordination between them.

There is a need to strengthen all regional Economic Commissions, which are valuable development-oriented focal points of the United Nations system at the regional level, providing assistance to countries in each region in undertaking their development activities. These Commissions also play a key role in assisting the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, and in conjunction with the specialized agencies, to undertake its action-oriented and policy-oriented work in the economic and development field. The Council should thus enhance coordination with and between them. The United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should also continue supporting the work of the regional Economic Commissions.

The Group of 77 and China strongly believe in the need for greater interaction and coordination between the Bretton Woods institutions and other bodies of the United Nations system at the policy level. This would entail, among other things, consideration of measures leading to the democratization of their governance and promoting more participative and transparent decision-making mechanisms — and we believe that these matters should be examined in depth in the context of the Agenda for Development. In terms of resolution 48/162, however, it would be more useful to consider improving cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in terms of improvements in the reporting

system. This particularly relates to preparing special reports or studies by the Bretton Woods institutions to the General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council, and for the latter bodies to have more substantive consideration of, and discussions on, these reports and/or studies.

On the documentation issue, we note the various points raised by the Secretary-General in his report. Some of these points will no doubt be touched upon when we consider methods to improve and enhance the work of the General Assembly and the various segments of the Economic and Social Council session.

However, I am constrained to comment briefly on paragraphs 68 and 74 of the report, which do not appear to take into account the views expressed last year on behalf of the Group of 77 and China by Algeria, the then Chairman of the Group of 77, on a number of occasions regarding a draft resolution entitled "Modalities of reporting in the economic, social and related fields", which, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General, reflect:

> "the very specific recommendations made by the Secretary-General". *(A/50/697, para. 67)*

In this regard, the Group of 77 and China had already expressed difficulties last year over various aspects of the draft resolution referred to in paragraph 68 of the Secretary-General's report, and thus could not support it. The Group of 77 and China are therefore not clear on the implications of paragraph 74 of the report, which states, among other things, that the Secretary-General

> "would like to reaffirm the recommendations put forth in his previous report"

the very recommendations reflected in the draft resolution I have just mentioned . In this regard, I can only express the hope of the Group of 77 and China that the Secretariat will take into account the clearly expressed view and position of the developing countries on this matter.

Finally, the Group of 77 and China look forward to considering in more detail the issues I have touched upon.

Mr. Dada (Pakistan): Allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields". The report contains many interesting ideas and recommendations, and has already sparked a vigorous debate amongst representatives on this issue.

In addition to the Secretary-General's report, a number of position papers have been circulated by various delegations. These papers contain specific proposals which we are examining with great care. Rather than critiquing the proposals that have been put forward, we would like today to share with the Assembly the basic premises that underlie our own approach to this issue.

First, we recognize and support the need for continuing reform of the United Nations economic and social machinery. All viable institutions need to adapt to a changing environment. The United Nations has been conscious of this fact, and has been engaged in restructuring and reform for a number of years. However, given the pace and intensity of change in recent years, especially in the global economic environment, the need to bring about appropriate changes in the United Nations has acquired even greater importance. The objective of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations system by avoiding duplication and overlap, improving coordination, further democratizing United Nations structures and making them more transparent and accountable has, quite rightly, become a major goal. We are therefore ready to support proposals that would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations structures.

Secondly, we would insist on the need to pursue reforms firmly within the ambit of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. A reform and restructuring exercise inevitably runs the risk of transforming the United Nations into an organization that mirrors existing economic and political power relations. This must not be allowed. Instead, the restructuring should result in a strengthened United Nations which is true to the original intent and purposes of the Charter. Scrupulous observance of Charter principles is the only way to ensure that this happens. The centrality of the United Nations role in the economic and social fields, the observance of the democratic process of decision making and universality of representation are amongst the key principles that need to be adhered to.

Thirdly, we would call for a clear acknowledgement of the linkage between increased resources and enhanced efficiency of the United Nations. Given the increasing demands on the United Nations system to promote development, it is obvious that increased resources have

to be provided to the Organization. Mere managerial and administrative changes cannot ensure an effective United Nations development machinery. Hence, proposals should incorporate a strong commitment to enhanced resources, and specify clear modalities to mobilize such resources.

We are convinced that in the absence of increased levels of resources, the present exercise will not result in any significant increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system. This does not mean that we see the attainment of increased funding as a precondition for addressing organizational reforms. Any measure that improves the ability of the United Nations to perform its development tasks is important in itself. It deserves, and will obtain, our careful consideration.

The proposals that are being put forward seek to realize a broad array of objectives, ranging from a clearer definition of the role of the General Assembly to improving the availability of documentation. We feel that it would be useful to concentrate on a few major objectives, and to put forward practical ideas to realize these objectives. We would suggest that this year measures be agreed upon to improve the United Nations role in three areas: coordination of global macroeconomic policies; coordination of the United Nations machinery itself; and functioning of operational activities.

The issue of United Nations operational activities is being dealt with in the context of the discussions on the triennial policy review. My delegation has already commented on this matter in the Second Committee. Hence, I shall concentrate my remarks on the first two areas.

A balanced global economic environment is necessary for improving the growth prospects of developing countries. It is also in the interest of the stability and growth of the economies of the developed countries. In fact, an appropriate mix of fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies, particularly of the major industrial economies, would contribute greatly to realizing the full growth potential in the world economy. The attainment of this objective has not occurred in the context of limited forums such as the G-7.

Also, as the global economy becomes increasingly integrated there is a need for strengthened surveillance by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of all economies, whether they be developing or developed. Given the influence of the developed economies, it is important that increasing attention be paid to their policies and actions. Greater symmetry in surveillance is in order.

The United Nations is best placed to deal with such matters. It has the mandate to deliberate on issues relating to coordination of global macroeconomic policies. Article 1(4) of the United Nations Charter authorizes the United Nations "to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations" for the attainment of "common ends" in the economic and social sectors. Furthermore, because it is the only universal and democratic intergovernmental organization, its decisions would take into account the interests of all nations and command the support of all countries.

We would suggest that within the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council, specifically the high-level segment of the Council, could be appropriately strengthened to play a role in generating ideas and shaping policies for global macroeconomic coordination.

Secondly, the activities of the many United Nations bodies involved in social and economic duties need to be better coordinated. This should be a purely managerial task, decisions being taken on pragmatic grounds. Unfortunately, political considerations are allowed to intrude, in the shape of efforts either to curtail the activities of some United Nations bodies or to maintain the privileged status of others. This renders the whole issue much more complex than it should be.

We believe that proceeding purely from the objective of enhancing efficiency, continuous efforts should be made to eliminate overlap and duplication and to achieve greater synergy between different organs of the United Nations development machinery. This can best be done by further strengthening the work of the Economic and Social Council specifically by taking appropriate measures to reinforce its coordination segment.

The outcome of the Assembly's deliberations on this issue can have a far- reaching impact on the United Nations ability to play a more effective role in the economic and social areas. Appropriate measures to rectify the weaknesses and deficiencies of the United Nations development machinery can have a tangible impact not only on the working of the Organization, but also on the lives of ordinary people all over the world. It is therefore incumbent upon us to deliberate on this issue in a careful and considered manner.

Mr. Lozano (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on progress in the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, contained in document A/50/697.

This session of the General Assembly, at which our Organization is celebrating such an important anniversary, has given rise to deep thought about the future of the United Nations and the role that its organs should fulfil in the new system of international relations that is taking shape. Mexico has actively participated in the reform process, convinced that it will contribute to increasing our Organization's efficiency and adapting it to the changing international situation. We believe that the current session is one more opportunity to strengthen the economic and social sectors of the United Nations so that they may carry out fully the mandate on international cooperation for development contained in the Charter.

In recent years the Organization has focused on tackling a variety of international conflicts, a thrust that has unfortunately not been reflected in the resolution of the most acute development problems, which continue to afflict most of the Earth's population. The content of the statements made at the highest level during the debate at the Special Commemorative Meeting and the Declaration adopted on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations again demonstrated the need for the international community to give the economic and social development problems of developing countries the attention they deserve. Without such political will, the reform of the United Nations will be inadequate.

Two years after the adoption of resolution 48/162, we have begun to see improvement in the functioning of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. In particular, positive steps have been taken with regard to operational activities. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done. Among such measures, we wish to reiterate our support for the establishment of a separate executive board for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The progress made at the institutional level has not been accompanied by similar steps with respect to financial resources. Proof of this is the lack of progress of the working group responsible for reviewing and analysing possible changes and improvements in the present system of funding operational activities. On the contrary, we note with concern a decrease in the overall resources devoted to official development assistance.

The methods of work and organization of the Economic and Social Council already adequately reflect the progress made in the reform process. The rapidity with which the various items of the agenda are being completed has been noted with appreciation by delegations.

Nevertheless, we agree with the Secretary-General on the need to adopt measures to give delegations enough time to conduct a careful and integrated examination of the substantive issues on its agenda. Otherwise, we would be reducing the general segment of the Economic and Social Council to a mere bureaucracy.

My delegation expresses again its support for the important function carried out by the regional commissions. In my region, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean plays a key role in the preparation and holding of various United Nations conferences. Furthermore, it is the ideal venue for carrying out a statistical and conceptual analysis of the region's economic and social situation and to generate ideas that promote development. In this connection, we support the strengthening of the regional commissions and the reinforcement of their coordination with the Economic and Social Council.

We attach special importance to the issue of documentation. The delay in the work of the various commissions during this session owing to the lack of documents requires our attention. This situation must be tackled from a broad perspective, going beyond mere numbers. The quality and timeliness of the submission of documents should be our objective.

Mexico reaffirms its commitment to continuing to cooperate in the process of reform in the economic and social fields. In this connection, and in accordance with the proposal my country made more than 10 years ago, we believe the time has come to reassess the advisability of rotating the Economic and Social Council sessions between Geneva and New York, and, to this end, we should like to obtain up-to-date information from the Secretary-General on the financial implications of this practice.

The restructuring and revitalization process must be guided by the very clear mandate handed down by the General Assembly; it cannot stem from pressures that correspond to the interests of a single State or group of States. The reform process should not strengthen some areas to the detriment of others. It must, in a balanced

fashion, apply to all the various organs of the United Nations.

Mr. Horiguchi (Japan): I should like to begin my statement on the issue of restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields by saluting the Secretary-General for the extensive work he put into the report in document A/50/697 and add.1, for consideration under this agenda item. In accordance with resolution 48/162, the report touches upon some of the most critical questions with respect to restructuring the United Nations system and revitalizing its capacity in the economic and social fields.

The Government of Japan attaches the utmost importance to this matter, as was made clear in the position paper it submitted to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Development and in the statement Foreign Minister Kono made to the General Assembly at the opening of this session. Our Prime Minister Murayama also touched upon this issue in his statement at the Special Commemorative Meeting for the fiftieth anniversary. In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policy-making and operational activities in the economic and social fields, much more must be done. The international community should intensify its efforts to achieve progress in this area. Clearly, the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on An Agenda for Development provides an appropriate forum in which to formulate workable agreements, and the Open-ended High-level Working Group on Strengthening the United Nations System, which was just established, will also serve a valuable purpose.

In devising measures for realizing reform, my delegation believes we should adhere to three general guidelines. First, we should always know what the priority of an organ or of its activities is. Secondly, we should avoid duplicating mandates and activities of organs. And, thirdly, we should promote mechanisms for maintaining coordination between organs and activities.

The Secretary-General treats quite extensively in his report the organizational issues that the Economic and Social Council is facing. Noteworthy progress has been made. As a result of the decisions made by the General Assembly — for example, in resolutions 45/264 and 48/162 — the Economic and Social Council has been improved in many respects. However, as it is the principal coordinator of United Nations policies and operational activities in the economic and social fields, further restructuring of the Council is necessary if it is to enhance its ability to play that role. My delegation therefore welcomes the 1995 agreed conclusions of the Council, which address the integrated consideration of the themes common to major international conferences, with a view to promoting better coherence and providing harmonized and integrated policy guidelines.

There are three major points I should like to raise today with regard to the restructuring of the Economic and Social Council.

First of all, its overall management needs to be improved. To this end, my delegation is convinced that the expanded Bureau, composed of 15 to 20 countries and meeting frequently, should be institutionalized within the Council with a more substantive mandate. It would also be wise to hold all sessions in New York instead of rotating the session sites.

Secondly, policy coordination must be put on a firmer footing. As the Secretary-General points out in paragraph 37 of his report, the high-level segment should perhaps produce more definitive conclusions, and its outcome should be more authoritative in the United Nations system as a whole. I hasten to add that in order for more definite conclusions to be reached there must be sufficient preparation at organizational sessions prior to the Council session proper. Also, policy dialogue with heads of international development agencies and financial institutions contributes significantly to policy coordination, and should be incorporated into the regular meeting schedule. It is, again, necessary to have sufficient preparation, particularly in selecting themes to be discussed at the dialogue meeting.

Thirdly, the nature of the Council's interaction with its subsidiary bodies should be modified. As the Council concentrates on the adoption of conclusions and recommendations during its general segment, after considering the reports of its subsidiary bodies, it needs to process them promptly. To that end, my delegation feels that since reports are received at different times of the year, and since there are too many to review all at once, the general segment should be divided in two, and the resulting half-segments held at different times of the year.

As for the regional commissions, my delegation believes they should prioritize their fields of activity and accelerate their efforts to restructure in order to enhance their general efficiency and effectiveness. As within the United Nations system it is the commissions that more directly reflect the regional diversity that exists in the

economic and social fields, they should strive to be as responsive as possible to the needs and problems of the regions they represent in planning and managing their activities.

It is my Government's strong conviction that, in order to heighten the overall impact of United Nations operational activities for development, we must enhance coordination between the United Nations funds, plans and specialized agencies engaged in United Nations operational activities for development, both at Headquarters and in the field. At the Headquarters level, where policy is coordinated, my delegation would like to underline the important role played by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), and to call the attention of Member States to paragraph 51 of the report of the Secretary-General, which refers to the appeal issued by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995 for measures to be taken to further strengthen the role of the Committee and its standing subsidiary committees. Coordination may be achieved through consolidation — merging several agencies into one — or by designating an organization to serve as coordinator for United Nations operational activities for development and providing it with a strong mandate to do so. The coordination function could be entrusted to a body already engaged in similar work, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which in the principal organizer of operational activities and which also provides most of the funding they require.

At the field level, where operational coordination is needed, we must fully utilize such means as the resident coordinator system and country strategy notes to coordinate the country programmes of different agencies, all the way from the preliminary research stage through monitoring and evaluation. The same means enable agencies to engage in coordination and identify priorities relevant to each country. In general, my delegation expects that the ACC task forces, which were established to follow up the recent major international conferences, will make a significant contribution to the resolution of substantive issues relating to field operations. They are also expected to play a significant role in reviewing the cross-cutting themes mentioned by the Secretary-General in paragraph 56 of his report. It is important to refer here to the ACC decision that the task forces should be time-bound, should develop a clear definition of their tasks, and should be discontinued when such tasks are completed. And, with respect to international conferences, my delegation wishes to repeat its view that the international community should give priority to following up those already held, rather than holding new ones.

At the field level, UNDP, with its 136 regional offices around the world, may be in the best position to provide assistance that meets local needs. On the other hand, every type of aid, both bilateral and multilateral, should be coordinated on the basis of strategies specific to individual countries. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the Council's 1995 high-level segment, which stated that specific modalities for achieving greater complementarity between the Bretton Woods institutions and the other organizations of the United Nations system could be pursued in the context of the work on the policy framework papers and the country strategy notes. The complementarity of these organizations is crucial in pursuing the comprehensive approach to development that Japan put forth in its position paper on the Agenda for Development.

Finally, let me touch briefly upon the issue of documentation. Although excessive documentation is not a problem in the economic and social fields alone, measures to limit the production of documents have a more obvious impact than just about anything else that can be done to make the system more efficient. In the light of the financial constraints under which the Organization is struggling, the massive expenses for documentation should be curtailed. My delegation takes this issue seriously, and therefore reaffirms its support for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his 1994 report on this matter.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): My delegation believes that General Assembly resolution 48/162 made a significant contribution to advancing the United Nations reform agenda, and has produced a number of far-reaching improvements in the work of the Economic and Social Council. We are particularly pleased with the Council's strengthened role in operational activities and in its functioning in relation to the affected development programmes and funds. The results evident in vastly improved operations and procedures of the Council's development subsidiaries are encouraging.

But, as is explicit in resolution 48/162 itself, these reforms were contemplated as only one step towards the larger objective of breathing more life into the Economic and Social Council, to bring about its transformation from a body which too many respected critics continue to

dismiss as ineffective, irrelevant and moribund into the vital organ envisaged by the founders of the United Nations — one capable of contributing meaningfully to the advancement of the broad range of critical economic and social issues within its purview.

In this respect, resolution 48/162, for all its accomplishments, was not enough by itself to correct some of the fundamental shortcomings of the Economic and Social Council. Regrettably, the Council's image, in the eyes and minds of too many important people, both friends and foes of the United Nations, remains tarnished. It has yet to dispel the wide perception of its role as ineffectual, its authority as too weak, its value as marginal. To cite just one example of this perception, The Commission on Global Governance, manifesting this critique, proposed last year that the Council be retired entirely. Paradoxically, the impression that the Council has not lived up to its United Nations Charter expectations prevails at a time when the global challenges are greatest and when the opportunities for the Council to rise to meet them also have peaked. We all have come to recognize the new global problems and needs ushered in by the end of the cold war. We constantly acknowledge that we now live in an era in which interconnected economic and social issues have assumed larger prominence on the international agenda, in which the call for cooperation across State boundaries to address these urgencies has intensified, and in which, as a result of our global interdependence, the need for vital, responsive and effective international institutions to address new demands is all the more imperative.

My Government shares the view that the Economic and Social Council has fallen short of the role envisaged for it by the drafters of the United Nations Charter. But we say this as a constructive critic, not as one wishing to be aligned with those who would abandon hope. Rather, we believe that we should continue striving to revitalize the Council, building upon the sound groundwork prepared by resolution 48/162. The General Assembly there recognized that reform is a dynamic process. It requires constant self-analysis and self-criticism in order to achieve self-improvement. My Government also believes that reform should not be considered in a vacuum, but should be well-grounded on a hard, cogent assessment of causes and effects. Before we embark on a course, we should be guided by a vision of where we want to go and, when we arrive there, of what ends we want to achieve. With this approach, proposals for reform should be shaped by the functional relation they bear to the relevant ends and means.

In this spirit, before I described some specific reform recommendations my delegation is advancing in connection with the current agenda item, it would be helpful to the Assembly's consideration of these ideas for me to preface them with four essential points: the diagnostic framework; the historical context; and the premises and the paramount objective that underlie our proposals.

First, as a starting point, our pertinent analysis should focus on the causes that have contributed to the Economic and Social Council's deficiencies and consequential low standing. Following are some of the considerations we have identified.

First, from early in its history, the Economic and Social Council tended to create subsidiary bodies without devoting adequate attention to their overall direction and coordination. On occasion new subsidiary entities were created as the needs arose, at times without adequate consideration being given to the mandates of other United Nations system bodies already performing similar functions. In time, this practice gave rise to a multiplicity of overlapping roles and duplicative operations among an ever larger number of United Nations entities. In some cases the Council properly delegated substantive authority for policy implementation to its technical and expert bodies. But in others it may have ceded, or its subsidiaries perhaps may have assumed on their own, policy-making roles which more properly should fall primarily within the jurisdictional province of the Council itself. In some cases the Council, to its own detriment, may have devolved an excessive degree of its prerogatives and authority to subsidiary bodies.

When the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council were created, their memberships were constituted differently from that of the Council itself. This structure laid the foundation for the subsidiaries to establish separate identities, exercise independent authority and derive political strength from their own intergovernmental power bases.

The international community has assigned paramount responsibility for formulating programmes and policies regarding certain critical economic and social issues to the international specialized agencies. These institutions, some of which predate the United Nations, have closely guarded their own prerogatives against any encroachment by United Nations entities, and their relationship to the United Nations has traditionally remained at arm's length

and somewhat tenuous. By their larger mandates and clear comparative advantages, the specialized agencies have effectively preempted or diminished some policy functions the Economic and Social Council might otherwise be able to assert in some vital areas.

Finally, within the United Nations itself, the Economic and Social Council's prerogatives in economic and social matters are not exclusive. They are shared with the General Assembly, which, through its Second and Third Committees, has established a structure largely duplicative of the Economic and Social Council's substantive scope.

These observations, to the extent that they are valid, raise some logical questions which should guide our thinking as we diagnose the Economic and Social Council's current weaknesses and explore possible remedies. Has the Council in fact created too many subsidiary bodies with overlapping mandates? In view of contemporary needs, resource realities and priorities, are all of these bodies necessary? To what extent should the Economic and Social Council, in order to strengthen its policy-making and coordinating functions, begin to assert greater policy-making authority over some or all of its subsidiary bodies? Should it reabsorb some of them, especially those that are the most ineffective, and perform some of those functions itself?

In this regard, it is noteworthy that resolution 48/162 itself took a major step in this direction by mandating some measure of transference of policy functions from United Nations development programmes and funds to the Economic and Social Council. Should this model be followed with regard to other subsidiary bodies? On a separate but related issue, can the Economic and Social Council establish a relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions and other specialized agencies, consistent with the mandates and comparative advantages of those bodies, that would enable the Council to perform its Charter functions more effectively? And can the Economic and Social Council similarly better define its relationship with the General Assembly in areas of shared competence?

How should the Economic and Social Council rearrange its procedures, agenda and meeting schedule in order to promote reforms that respond to its inadequacies and improve the continuity and effectiveness of its attention to, and guidance of, United Nations economic and social affairs?

These questions lead me to my second point, the historical backdrop. Have we engaged theses issues before and, if so, how have we dealt with them? As I reviewed prior General Assembly experience on the topic before us, I realized that not only is reform dynamic, but, like much other movement in worldly affairs, it often comes full circle. I say this because the history of recent United Nations reforms relating to the Economic and Social Council reveals that much of the debate we have heard here today has antecedents in this Hall, and that many of the proposals we have discussed, as well as those I will describe, are neither novel nor startling. Indeed, a number of them are reforms actually approved in long-standing resolutions of the General Assembly, but not fully implemented. I found support for some of the proposals my delegation is advancing today in ideas long ago initiated by the Group of 77, by the European Union and by the Nordic countries.

I shall cite just two examples. First, resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 *inter alia* adopted the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System. Introduced by the Group of 77, the resolution called for restructuring of the Economic and Social Council, directing it, among other things, to serve as a central forum for the formulation of policy recommendations on international economic and social issues; discontinue, streamline or regroup some of its subsidiaries and assume the functions of others; assume the function of acting as preparatory committee for United Nations conferences; meet more frequently in shorter, subject-oriented sessions; and refrain from creating new subsidiaries.

Secondly, in connection with the work of a Special Commission established in 1985 as a result of resolution 40/237 to consider reform of the Economic and Social Council, the European Commission presented a paper, set forth in document E/1988/75, containing a package of significant Council reforms. These proposals included calls for the restructuring or merging of certain subsidiaries, and for reassigning of their functions to other United Nations entities.

I turn next to the premises upon which our proposals are based. In this regard, I believe it is essential to underscore a number of points. First, we recognize that people and Governments in all countries are struggling to reduce public spending and to do more with less. There are no citizens, whether in developed or developing countries, who support waste of public

resources, either in domestic spending or in the international organizations their tax levies finance. We all want our governmental and intergovernmental institutions and their public employees to serve us with utmost effectiveness and efficiency. It is essential that we carry this message to every corner of the international community. We must be sure it is heard, and must be guided by the fiscal discipline it demands.

Secondly, we must also stress, however, that while the need to economize is imperative, the predominant force driving our reform energies should be to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization of which we are all Members. By these means we will enable the United Nations to better serve its Members and their peoples, to improve the way its constituents regard the Organization, and, as a by-product, also to stretch our resources.

Thirdly, from these premises flows a logical principle we deem it important to put on the table. Once we have agreed upon the Organization's budget for a fiscal period, it should be possible to reprogramme to other mutually agreed-upon priorities any concrete savings clearly identified and achieved by reforms we carry out within the adopted budget ceiling.

Finally, I come to the objective of our efforts. We must strive to assure ourselves, our respective Governments and others interested in our work that our endeavors will be fruitful. Our work to improve the Economic and Social Council must be meaningful, responsive and effective. We must acknowledge the gravity of the situation, and counter the severity of the attacks mounted against the Council. Responding adequately to this urgency should guide our energies and be our overarching goal. With this as our purpose, placebos to pacify the patient, or tinkering and trifles to distract the critics will not suffice. If the repair is not equal to the flaw, we will only prolong and intensify the problem. We must approach the task ahead of us earnestly, with the seriousness and good faith it deserves. If we are to serve our ends well, we must emerge from our labours with a restructured Economic and Social Council more capable of fulfilling its Charter function. The reform of the Economic and Social Council merits no less, when the usefulness, indeed the survival, of the institution has been called into question.

The proposals we now introduce emerge from the points I have outlined. Let me go through some of them briefly. I will only outline them, because they are contained in full in the printed text of my statement, which has been distributed.

First, in order to strengthen the Economic and Social Council's policy guidance and coordinating functions, improve its operations and raise the level of representation at its meetings, we make a number of proposals. The Council's agenda should concentrate more on larger economic and social policy issues within the Economic and Social Council's purview, concerning which: general debate would be desirable in order to air relevant issues and ideas, introduce concepts and advance these closer to international consensus; the General Assembly and/or United Nations-related development entities need or would benefit from the Economic and Social Council policy recommendations; the Economic and Social Council should serve as arbiter between conflicting policies or priorities of its subsidiary bodies or functional commissions; the Council should provide coordination and policy guidance as a unified governing body for United Nations development and operational activities; and the Council could serve as a deliberative forum for round-table discussions involving, where appropriate, participants from academia, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Secondly, the meeting schedule of the Economic and Social Council should shorten its annual substantive session perhaps to two weeks, supplemented by shorter, more frequent special sessions.

Thirdly, the outputs of meetings should be outcome-oriented, rather than mere general debates summarized by the Chair. The thematic and substantive sessions should produce specific resolutions, draft declarations, proposals for programmatic and appropriate follow-up actions and guidance for reform of operational activities.

As to venue, we believe that, under this schedule, sessions should be held in New York.

The Bureau should be enlarged, and its role expanded, so that it can serve as an executive committee, meeting between substantive sessions of the Council to provide better organizational, coordination and policy-formulation guidance.

We believe that, to reduce overlapping and duplication of mandates and functions and to eliminate ineffective, unnecessary bodies, we should focus on the Committee for Programme and Coordination, with a view to having it absorbed by the Economic and Social

Council to the extent to which it considers economic and social issues.

The World Food Council, we believe, has been ineffective and should be eliminated.

To ensure that United Nations work related to energy and natural resources complements the international commitments and recommendations contained in Agenda 21, the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, the Committee on Natural Resources and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development should be integrated into the Commission on Sustainable Development.

We believe that, to improve the Economic and Social Council's coordinating functions, action should be directed towards specific ways of improving cooperation, communication and coordination between various United Nations agencies providing emergency relief. We should also direct similar action towards various United Nations agencies providing development-assistance programmes and towards the mandate structures of the regional commissions.

We believe that, in order to improve relations with other United Nations entities, we should direct action towards specific ways of achieving better coordination between United Nations entities and international financial institutions. The focus of the proposed improvements should relate particularly to the establishment of priorities, the implementation of policies of United Nations conferences, the collection and dissemination of data, the use of existing resources in the transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation, the provision of technical assistance, operations in the field, intergovernmental and Secretariat consultations and policy dialogues at Headquarters and in the field.

We think that in order to streamline the work of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly, the Assembly should direct its Second and Third Committees to review their agendas with a view to streamlining them, biennializing the consideration of items and avoiding duplicative debates.

Similarly, we should biennialize the sessions of some of the Economic and Social Council's subsidiary bodies.

We believe that in order to strengthen management recruitment, we should define more uniform terms office and methods of appointing the heads of the United Nations operational programmes and funds and establish a limit on the number of terms the heads of these agencies could serve.

In closing, I wish to note that, while history may reaffirm how little new there is under the sun, what may be different in my presentation is that my delegation is taking the initiative in advancing a substantial package of reforms. In the past, we have acted all too often as a passive, sidelines critic. We are no longer content with that role.

Ambassador Albright is fond of saying that the United States relationship with the United Nations should be one of first friend as well as first critic. We put these ideas before the General Assembly because we care about the mission and mandate of this Organization. We care about its survival. We want to see it work better, improve the way it serves our Governments and peoples and mend the way in which it is perceived by the public, both nationally and internationally.

Mr. Ramoul (Algeria): The Algerian delegation aligns itself fully with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and it wishes to add some complementary remarks.

Consideration of the overall review of the implementation of resolution 48/162, "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields" comes at a rather appropriate juncture, in that it coincides usefully with a salient event of the current session of the General Assembly: the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. In our view, these two complementary exercises should be undertaken in such a manner as to target the objective of consolidating the relevance of the United Nations and further improving its role in economic and social-development activities.

This is why it is imperative that both exercises should result in a final break with regrettable strategies aimed at turning procedural questions and an accrued demand for reform into prerequisites preventing all possibility of substantive debate about the real stakes and about problems affecting the operational capabilities of the United Nations to realize its enormous potential to support economic and social development in developing countries.

The issue of reform of the United Nations system, in particular in the economic and social fields, has been on the Organization's agenda for at least 20 years, and it has been the subject of an impressive number of studies undertaken within the United Nations system and by independent persons and entities. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have both adopted many resolutions and decisions on the issue, a list of which is annexed to the Secretary-General's report on this agenda item. This shows the importance that Member States attach to the Organization's performance and their concern about improving further its actions, especially in the field.

It is true, in view of the significant development of the United Nations system, in terms of the number of bodies and institutions in it today, and in view also of the nature and complexity of the interrelations between the components of the whole system and their respective links with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, that increased coordination is needed in order to preserve the harmony and consistency of United Nations activities aimed at achieving the global objectives coming out of recent major international conferences.

It is none the less disturbing to take stock of the glaring lack of balance in recent years between the time and efforts devoted to the pursuit of the objective of coordination and the time and effort, in real terms, devoted to formulating and implementing the programmes themselves, or even that devoted to implementing the conclusions of the studies on this coordination.

Coordination, as a theme for discussions in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies, is really no novelty. Indeed, in the form of restructuring, it has been a constant concern of the Organization. A study undertaken on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations showed that this matter had consumed 3 per cent of the total expenditures of the United Nations system.

The debate on this issue over the years has resulted in a particular form of literature within the United Nations system. Key expressions in this literature include the following: "concerted action", "priority setting", "programme evaluation", "long-term programming", "monitoring", "evaluation", "coordination at the national level", "capacity and rational use of combined resources", "global strategy for development", "country programming" and, lastly, "country strategy note".

Needless to say, coordination is a critical factor for efficient management of the United Nations — before and after all decision-taking processes, especially with regard to operational activities for development during one of the darkest periods in the history of financial-resources allocation. Nevertheless, one cannot but emphasize that coordination as a legitimate preoccupation seems to have become an obsession and, consequently, an end in itself, not linked to the established objectives.

We are therefore entitled to ask a number of questions about the purpose of this coordination. Is it an indirect means of limiting the natural evolution of the United Nations system and its resources? Or is it a mechanism of defence against an enhanced role for the United Nations in the economic and social fields?

Paradoxically, just as resolution 48/162 is being considered in the last stage of the series of measures taken by the General Assembly with a view to revitalizing and restructuring the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, we are witnessing a proliferation of ideas and working groups, inside and outside the United Nations, calling for further reforms, with no thought for providing reliable explanations of the goals and purpose of such exercises.

As far as the ideas for the reform of the Economic and Social Council are concerned, this frenzy of reform for the sake of reform — which often does not rely on any legislative mandate and even sometimes violates the provisions of the United Nations Charter — threatens the stability of the structures and functioning of the United Nations system as a whole. It also threatens to hamper the system's learning ability, drawn from experience and practice, which in turn requires a reasonable lapse of time in implementing the measures from previous reforms. That is why, in our view, a moratorium on reform is required after the current review of resolution 48/162.

While conveying our appreciation for the efforts that the Secretariat has invested in the elaboration of the report on the item we are discussing today, and in particular for its timely issuance, allow me to underline the following aspects.

First, my delegation supports any effort to improve the working methods of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, but we cannot subscribe to the strange practices developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as regards the

participation of observers. In effect dismissing the universality of the United Nations, the steps taken to discipline observers to the UNICEF Executive Board are unacceptable, to say the least, since they are discriminatory and have no organizational reason, and especially since they are against the spirit and tenor of the Charter and the various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

In particular, we are referring to the requirement imposed on delegations to specify in advance the theme or themes on which they wish to intervene. If they fail to do so, these delegations are not only prevented from contributing to the debate, but also publicly denounced at the opening of the session of the Executive Board because they have not complied with this rule. It is imperative for the General Assembly to adopt the necessary measures to eradicate these practices within one of its most prestigious subsidiary bodies.

While welcoming the fact that the Secretary-General's report provides, in Annex I, a list of subsidiary bodies and mechanisms in the economic, social and related fields, my delegation regrets the omission from this list of the Committee for Development Planning, which was nevertheless included in the agenda of this year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council with a view to revitalizing its activities, especially through the renewal of its membership.

As regards the section of this report concerning documentation, my delegation is astonished to notice that, in spite of the position adopted on this matter by the Group of 77 and China last year — when my country had the privilege to preside over the Group — expressing reservations on the recommendations of the Secretary-General aimed at rationalizing the reporting in the economic, social and related fields, this year's report insists in the same vein on recommending the very same measures, with total disregard for the views of 130 countries. My delegation rejects this type of approach on the part of the Secretariat, since such practices disregard the point of view of the majority of Member States of the United Nations. We stress the need to ensure that the Secretariat respect the neutrality required in carrying out its functions and in complying strictly with the will and the views of Member States.

For the information of delegations, my delegation has attached to the text of this statement distributed to Members a copy of the letter addressed to the initiators of the draft resolution on "Modalities of reporting in the economic, social and related fields", referred to in the Secretary-General's report, as well as the relevant excerpts of our statement on this item during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I should like to propose, with the Assembly's consent, that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 12.15 p.m.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I therefore request those delegations wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

Mr. Jogi (India): The Secretary-General's report on "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields" has provided a useful compilation of measures taken in the aftermath of the adoption of resolution 48/162. There are also several proposals in the report for bringing about better coordination in United Nations activities in the economic and social sectors, ensuring a more focused follow-up of decisions taken, and giving greater visibility to the economic and social policy dialogue taking place in the United Nations. While several of these proposals merit further consideration, there are some which, we believe, do not meet the requirements of developing countries. In its assessment of the proposals presented, my delegation supports the statement made by the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77.

We believe that the purpose of our endeavours has been to reorient the focus of the United Nations towards and to enhance its role in development. With this in mind, in the follow-up measures that should emanate from the current session of the General Assembly, we should look more closely at the functioning of the Economic and Social Council, the conduct of the economic discussions in the General Assembly and the question of resources for development, particularly for operational activities.

My delegation supports a stronger role for the Economic and Social Council in the international economic and development dialogue. For this purpose, however, we have to look not so much at the Council's functions, but at its functioning. In the United Nations Charter and other legislative mandates, adequate responsibility has been vested in the Council. We have to work to promote and strengthen its deliberative and coordinating processes so that it can generate a message on development issues that is considered relevant,

meaningful and worth listening to by other institutions involved in development.

Towards this end, we should consider the following measures.

First, the theme selected for the high-level segment should be one that is at the cutting edge of the development dialogue. Instead of repeating discussions on subjects that may have been considered in other forums, we should work to select issues on which a debate in the United Nations would provide added value. There are enough issues and perspectives that are not covered in the sectoral orientation adopted by other institutions.

Secondly, for this segment, the existing provision for a joint report by the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies and Bretton Woods institutions, could be implemented.

Thirdly, in the coordination segment, there should be more opportunity available for discussions on activities undertaken in the specialized agencies. In view of the detailed technical work taking place in the functional commissions and the general policy guidance role of the General Assembly, which is also the universal forum, the Economic and Social Council can create a niche for itself by working to provide better coordination among the activities of the United Nations system. The concerned organizations and agencies should have no fear of being coordinated by the Council, but should rather look upon it as a forum through which they coordinate their own activities.

Fourthly, the general segment of the Economic and Social Council needs considerable improvement. Too many reports of subsidiary bodies are considered in too short a time. These reports are also considered in sequential fashion, rather than in a comparative or cross- sectoral examination. At one level, there should be no need in the Economic and Social Council to repeat a debate that took place in the functional commissions. An executive report containing a compilation of recommendations from the functional commissions that need the specific approval of the Economic and Social Council should be prepared by the Secretariat. The debate in the Economic and Social Council should focus specifically on these issues and on the harmonization of the work of subsidiary bodies.

Fifthly, the agreed conclusions that were adopted during the last substantive session of the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to conferences should be put into effect. These should include measures such as assigning one functional commission primary responsibility for the follow-up to each conference. The thematic unity of the conference outcome should be maintained in the follow-up process, especially if we are to promote an integrated and holistic view of development. The political profile and visibility of the follow-up process is also important. There is a need to ensure that the compositions of the different commissions are on a par with each other and to encourage the use of high-level segments, the participation of non-governmental organizations, multi-year programmes of work and so on.

My delegation supports the use of the Economic and Social Council to provide year-round coordination, guidance and dialogue, as required. There is no need for any other, smaller inter-sessional mechanisms, high-level or otherwise, or institutions such as expanded Bureaus. These go against the trend towards democratization of decision-making, transparency and enhancing participation. Similarly, the role of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council lies in facilitating organization of work rather than providing any substantive inter-sessional guidance. My delegation also has some hesitation regarding the proposal to split up the segments of the Economic and Social Council once again. It was only a few years ago that we combined the different segments with the aim of creating a more efficient and streamlined Economic and Social Council. It is too early to try to turn back the clock.

We also support the creation of inter-agency mechanisms by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), so as, *inter alia*, to ensure a more coordinated follow-up to the conferences. However, in the creation of these inter-agency task forces, their relevance to any particular issue or conference must be examined. The theme identified for each task force should be one enjoying clear intergovernmental consensus. The work of these inter-agency task forces should also be more transparent to the intergovernmental process.

As regards the work of the General Assembly, particularly the Second Committee, the following steps could be considered: first, the clustering of agenda items should be examined so as to provide a more focused debate. Secondly, the work of specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and other

bodies, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Health Organization (WHO), should be provided greater visibility.

Thirdly, the possibility of identifying a theme for discussion under each cluster should be examined.

Fourthly, reports of intergovernmental subsidiary mechanisms should be presented not only by representatives of the Secretariat, but also by the Chair of the intergovernmental process. This would make possible the presentation of a clearer political assessment of developments and constraints.

Our efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations in development will not really succeed unless we increase the resources at its disposal. The language on resources in resolution 48/162 was quite clear. Significant commitments were also made in Agenda 21, as well as at the World Summit for Social Development and the Conferences held at Cairo, Vienna and Beijing. We also need to examine the possibility of translating a potential peace-keeping dividend into enhanced funds for operational activities.

While it may be a fact that the business of the Executive Boards set up after adoption of resolution 48/162 is conducted in a more focused manner, linking this to the reduced size of the Boards may not necessarily be correct. The fact remains that the functioning of the Boards has been modified in several ways: the number of meetings has been increased and the agenda more focused, the discussions are more in the form of dialogues rather than formal statements and there is increased use of informal discussions both between delegations and between the Secretariat and the delegations.

It is also disconcerting that the fragile consensus of resolution 48/162, in which there was a distinct linkage between reform for the Boards and the inflow of resources, has not been honoured. The question of restructuring therefore needs to be looked at from a comprehensive perspective in which the responsibilities and obligations on all sides are taken seriously and implemented.

The Acting Chairman: We have heard eight speakers so far in this meeting, and we have 17 speakers left on this agenda item. I should like to appeal to all the speakers to be as brief as possible and to endeavour to limit their statements to 10 minutes. The cooperation of representatives in this regard would be much appreciated.

Mr. Butler (Australia): Having heard your remarks of just a moment ago, Mr. Acting President, I wish to assure you that we have prepared relatively brief remarks on this important subject.

Three weeks ago, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, all of us declared in this Hall that:

> "The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations must be seized as an opportunity to redirect it to greater service to humankind, especially to those who are suffering and are deeply deprived. This is the practical and moral challenge of our time. Our obligation to this end is found in the Charter. The need for it is manifest in the condition of humankind." *(resolution 50/6)*

it is therefore right for us to focus today on the work of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields.

Two basic questions need to be answered: what to do and how to do it best.

The answer to the first question has been given in the cycle of six great conferences which have identified and proposed solutions to the central economic and social issues confronting people around the world today. Those conferences have given us the agenda we need — the agenda on children, the environment, human rights, population, social development and women — and it will be completed at the Habitat Conference in the middle of next year.

Simply put, we now have the new human-focused agenda that is relevant to people today and addresses the future for all people which we have promised to work to create.

The first requirement for progress is to know what to do, but there will be no practical progress unless that knowledge is matched with a clear answer to the second question, that is, how to do it best. This answer is being given by the General Assembly because it has under way four ad hoc working groups on reform, with a fifth about to start. These groups are focused on an Agenda for Peace, an Agenda for Development, reform of the Security Council, and the crucial issue of the financial situation of the United Nations. The fifth group will deal with the United Nations system — the system we will need for the twenty-first century.

In this context it is appropriate to refer again to the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary, wherein we pledged to:

> "give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established." (*resolution 50/6, p. 2*)

No one should have any doubt: the work we are undertaking in these five working groups of the General Assembly is crucial to the future health of the United Nations and, above all, to its ability to respond effectively to the needs of people all over the world.

Central to the creation of a new and more effective United Nations is the future role of the Economic and Social Council. The Council is the principal organ established in the Charter of the United Nations through which the Charter's promise of "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" should be realized.

Two years have passed since the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/162 on reform of the economic and social work of the United Nations. It is now time to look at the progress made and to consider those areas where further progress is needed.

In my statement today I will not comment on every aspect of resolution 48/162, but seek to highlight some areas of key improvements and matters on which Australia believes further work needs to be done. Overall, there has been considerable improvement in the effectiveness of the Executive Boards. They have become better focused and more able to grapple with substantative issues. The United Nations Development Programme's discussion of the successor arrangements to the fifth programming cycle represents clear evidence of this improvement. Other examples could be given.

The revised operational segment of the Economic and Social Council now provides a valuable opportunity for dialogue, enabling us to discuss with the Heads of the Funds and Programmes the performance of their agencies, the key issues they confront, and their own views on those issues.

On the functioning of the Council as a whole, its meetings still see too many set piece statements. We need more robust and constructive dialogue. We may also need to think again about the way the different segments of the Council interact and keep open the option of further structural change to achieve greater effectiveness of the Council. It also is important that the body charged with coordination in the social, economic and related fields should be able to take into account the full range of the United Nations' activities, embracing not only the funds and programmes but the specialized agencies as well. In our view, the specialized agencies do not participate in this process effectively. Some appear to remain fixated on their statutory independence from the United Nations instead of seeking opportunities, in a pro-active manner, to collaborate cooperatively with the United Nations and its funds and programmes.

Australia acknowledges that progress has been made. But we need to do more. If we are to find the right opportunity to amplify or fine-tune resolution 48/162, it is our firm view that subsequent detailed decisions on reform need to be carefully crafted in negotiations and in joint discussions. To be successful, these discussions must be truly open-minded. We need freedom from the mind-sets of the past. We have witnessed monumental change in recent years in political, technological and economic terms. This changing order provides this body with an opportunity for robust, constructive and bold action to revitalize the work of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

Australia does not propose in this statement to spell out specific actions to abolish, reduce, revise or renew discrete entities of the system. In this context, may I say that while we have taken this choice today, our delegation has listened with great care and deeply welcomes the step that the representative of the United States just took in presenting some very detailed proposals to help fuel our future negotiations and discussions. Although in this statement I will not do the same, we believe that the decisions that we will need to take, arrived at through negotiations, are helped by specific proposals such as those made today by the United States.

In looking to further reform of the Economic and Social Council and the role of the United Nations in the economic and social arena, we believe we should insist on the rigorous application of the following three key principles.

First, there must be clear and unambiguous coherence of United Nations action. Development is a complex process and integrated responses are required for gains to be sustainable. Effective mechanisms must therefore be established to place the Council at the

forefront of such coordination, so as to ensure a unified coordinated response across regions and across sectors.

Secondly, we must put behind us both the reality and the perception of duplication. Each major subject area should be addressed in one, and only one, institution. The first form of duplication is wantonly wasteful of scarce resources and the latter engenders a form of competition which distracts from performance.

Thirdly, and finally, there must be true commitment to effectiveness and accountability. As the Declaration on the Fiftieth Anniversary notes, action on development objectives

> "has not been adequately implemented". *(resolution 50/6, para.3)*

This must be redressed without delay and greater and more strategic effort must be applied to priority activities that support and augment national development efforts.

Reform and revitalization of the United Nation's economic and social programmes remain an urgent task. The eradication of poverty, the enhancement of the status of women, the protection of our shared environment, the provision of basic rights and more equitable distribution of wealth have all become key issues for Member States and for the peoples of the world. We expect the United Nations to be capable of responding effectively to these issues in accordance with its mandate.

In the year in which we have recommitted ourselves to the Charter of the United Nations we now need to act to provide the very best instruments for the achievement of those goals. Australia will not resile from the difficult choices that we will need to make, and make quickly, to achieve reform.

Mr. Florencio (Brazil): My delegation supports the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 on this agenda item and wishes to present some additional remarks on how we envisage the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

The principles of restructuring contained in resolutions 45/264 and 48/162 remain valid, and our task should be focused on the implementation of these resolutions and at the same time on the issue of financing. I will comment on those two aspects.

In reviewing the institutional reforms introduced by resolution 48/162, it is clear that further improvement is needed in the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies.

As far as the General Assembly is concerned, my delegation believes it is time for a change in our working methods. The United Nations has an important deliberative role. It is a unique forum where, based on the principle of equality of States and universality of its membership, issues can be addressed in an integrated manner. This role should be preserved and enhanced.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that debates are often repetitive and issues end up being dealt with in a very general way. Delegations are not adequately informed, either because they lack the adequate documentation or because they are unable to absorb all the material made available to them. In the end, the lack of a meaningful debate affects the outcome of our negotiations on draft resolutions.

My delegation is persuaded that we could improve the level of the debates in the General Assembly. How? First, there is a need to rationalize the agendas of the Second and Third Committees. The clustering of issues has to be reviewed to avoid a situation in which on the same morning one delegation makes a statement on human settlements and another makes one on trade and development. We could also examine areas where a multi-year programme of work should be established.

Secondly, we should explore the possibility of debating issues in informal settings. Such meetings, I insist, would not alter the nature of the debates in the General Assembly, but would aim to enhance knowledge on the issues being debated. We could achieve this through a set of informal meetings during the first semester of each year, by such means as briefings, hearings and brainstorming sessions to be convened by the Secretariat. We are aware that the agenda of the United Nations is extremely loaded, so not everyone would need to participate in every informal meeting. Instead, there could be a sort of core group of interested delegations that would have the opportunity to follow up on certain topics in the inter-sessional period. These delegations should spread information on these meetings to other delegations that could not participate in them.

Such meetings, which could be organized at very low cost, would involve a variety of participants. Several

branches of the Secretariat — for instance, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — could be encouraged to present their various opinions on such occasions. Representatives or New York liaison officers of other institutions or specialized agencies, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, could also participate. We could also invite other representatives — from universities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations — to such meetings. The Secretariat would stimulate the participation of various delegations in this core group, including those from smaller missions, so that the same issues would not always be monopolized by the same people.

Thirdly, there is a need to enhance New York-based capacities in the economic field. UNCTAD, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the regional commissions should take part in the debates through their liaison offices or representatives. DESIPA must preserve its analytical capacity regarding economic issues. In addition, the United Nations presence at and activity in meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions should be enhanced.

The existence of the General Assembly as the highest United Nations organ does not preclude the need for a representative body with limited membership that can focus on specific economic and social issues. The Economic and Social Council should be called on to play a greater role in addressing some major economic issues. To do so, it should develop closer, more focused dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). My delegation has already stressed that the present transition period which the Bretton Woods institutions are going through opens a window of opportunity for a more productive relationship between these organizations and the United Nations.

The report of the Secretary-General presents concrete recommendations on how to improve the work done in the different segments of the Economic and Social Council. We agree that a more authoritative legislative outcome for the high-level and coordination segments could be envisaged. As to the high-level policy dialogue, financial and trade institutions should provide relevant special reports and studies on selected themes, within their respective mandates and areas of expertise, as well as on important developments in the world economy. This provision of resolution 48/162 has never been enacted, according to the report.

As I have already stated, our priority in the short run should be to fully implement the measures adopted on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

The globalization of the world economy and the growing complexity of social issues will require, however, that at some stage we take a fresh look at the structure and functions of this United Nations body. The Secretary-General has proposed the establishment of

> "a flexible high-level inter-sessional mechanism in order to facilitate a timely response to evolving socio-economic realities", (*A/50/697, para. 78*)

as well as of an expanded Bureau. These proposals are not yet clear. We are persuaded, however, that we should examine them in a balanced, constructive way.

The harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of functional commissions should be one of our objectives. Functional commissions should develop multi-year programmes of work for the follow-up and review of conference programmes of action. We also should ensure that functional commissions are treated on an equal footing, in particular when a commission is responsible for the follow-up of a major United Nations conference.

The issue of reporting also needs rationalization. We believe that not all issues discussed at the functional commissions should be brought to the attention of the General Assembly.

Institutional reform cannot lead to efficiency unless accompanied by increasing resources and the necessary political will and commitment to provide such resources. Funding of operational activities is an essential element of any exercise of revitalization and restructuring of the United Nations in the economic and social fields. My delegation will therefore insist that we reach a decision on financing of operational activities before the end of the present session.

Mr. Choulkov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): At the outset, and as a number of other representatives have done, I should like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/50/697.

As we attach great importance to the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic,

social and related fields, the Russian delegation would like to offer the following assessments of the implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, and also share our ideas concerning possible recommendations in the context of the forthcoming review of those resolutions at the current session.

We have witnessed some progress regarding improved interaction between the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, although there is a need to embody in practice and fine-tune the distribution of functions between these two organs. In so doing, it is especially important to give the Council greater independence in making final decisions on a series of issues. In this connection, we support the relevant ideas proposed by the Secretary-General in his report.

We are in favour of the rationalization of the Second Committee's agenda and of the improved clusterization of separate items and sub-items, in order to ensure an integrated consideration of interrelated subjects or areas of activity.

In a number of cases it would evidently be appropriate to hold special joint meetings of the Second and Third Committees, and to transmit the most important and complex issues to the plenary meetings.

We are satisfied in general with the new format of work of the Economic and Social Council session. Nevertheless, in the current critical situation for the United Nations, the Council should perform its function as coordinator of development activities in the United Nations system in a more complete manner, and also show greater responsibility in guiding the operational activities and work of its subsidiary machinery.

In this connection, we would like to highlight some recommendations aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the Council's work. First, the legal standing of the Council's decisions and agreed recommendations should be raised by achieving maximum agreement among Member States in their conclusions on the results of the work in all the sectors it covers. Secondly, the competence of the Council on issues upon which it is authorized to take final decisions should be safeguarded. Thirdly, the practice should be instituted of holding brief working sessions of the Council, mainly on coordination issues, but also on cooperation with other actors in the Council's field of activities. It is important to strengthen the role of the Bureau as a leader and initiator in the inter-sessional period, *inter alia* by convening meetings on a fuller scale when necessary.

We would also recommend giving the Council a leading role in developing the United Nations cooperation with the specialized agencies and Bretton Woods institutions, *inter alia* through joint preparation of documentation on key issues and maximum collaboration of United Nations and Bretton Woods representatives in the field.

As for the separate segments of the Economic and Social Council session, we would like to make the following proposals.

As concerns the high-level segment, it is necessary to select the themes well in advance — preferably, before the end of the preceding year, at the resumed session of the Council — and to involve the Bretton Woods institutions more actively in the preparation of both the materials for a policy dialogue and the documents for ministerial meetings. There is an obvious urgent need to ensure the agreed character of its final documents — be they a declaration or agreed conclusions.

With respect to the coordination segment, in general we are satisfied with the way it works and the final documents it adopts. We agree with the proposal in the Secretary-General's report that the selection of the theme for the coordination segment should be made by the Council itself. It is necessary to pay greater attention to ensuring an adequately high level of representatives' participation, especially in the light of the fact that in the coming years this segment is expected to consider major concrete issues related to the coordinated follow-up by the United Nations to the decisions of recent major forums.

Within the framework of this segment, it is advisable to consider the whole set of issues related to coordination, including the reports of such coordinating bodies as the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC). A dialogue could also take place between members of the Council and ACC representatives, and with the participation of officers of the CPC — the Chairman, members of the Bureau or other members of the Committee involved.

The measures adopted by the Council to improve the operational activities segment are designed to increase its effectiveness, especially by ensuring an appropriate level

of participation at its high-level meetings. It is important to continue the useful practice of inviting officers from the field to such meetings — directors of country offices of United Nations funds and programmes, resident coordinators and other senior staff. It is important to ensure that the Council has an active role in the triennial policy review of operational activities.

In our view, a number of problems are still pending in the work of the general segment. Much remains to be done for it to take over the Council's previous "traffic controller" function. The Council should effectively manage all its subsidiary mechanisms, including the functional and regional commissions as well as expert bodies, redistributing the work among them in areas of shared responsibilities when necessary. While fully supporting the agreed conclusions of this year's session of the Council, we would like to recall the proposal made by the Russian delegation at that session, namely, to conduct, in the next few years, a comprehensive review of the activities of all those organs in order to find ways and means of rationalizing them.

We support measures proposed in the 1994 report of the Secretary-General, document E/1994/88, on the rationalization of documentation for the Economic and Social Council. We see two basic problems here: the quality of documents and their timely submission.

In the first case, we feel that we should find a way to ensure that the initially bold ideas, intentions and wording in draft documents are not lost during their meandering from one level of the bureaucracy to another. We should know exactly who is responsible for the contents of a document, since collective responsibility — or, sometimes, a complete absence of responsibility — is unacceptable.

As for the timely submission of documents, this is a matter of strict control over the relevant administrative and technical services. We hope that this issue will remain under consideration by the Fifth Committee, as a matter of priority.

Despite a number of administrative measures aimed at restructuring and reshuffling certain units of the United Nations Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council is still without an efficient secretariat. We commend the organizational and coordinating role of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. However, much more needs to be done, including measures to meet substantive requirements of the members of the Council and to ensure a positive influence on the substantive side of the Council's work. In our view, the proposal to appoint a special high-level officer in the area of United Nations development activities should be considered from this perspective.

We take a positive view of the recent involvement of non-governmental organizations and representatives of business and academic circles in discussions on individual and major subjects. Such measures as organizing special meetings, panel discussions and briefings are of great value to the Council and help to develop a more balanced and comprehensive approach.

The new format and working methods in the Executive Boards of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have, in general, proved useful and demonstrate a more efficient approach to the consideration of agenda items. It is important to streamline the timetable for the Boards' sessions so that they fit in as well as possible with the schedule of United Nations meetings and conferences. Thus, the timely submission of their reports for consideration by the Economic and Social Council would be ensured.

The particular role of funds and programmes in the implementation of decisions taken by major United Nations forums must be noted. This places additional responsibility on their Executive Boards.

In conclusion, I would like to note that we are in favour of the continuation of consultations within the framework of the special General Assembly working group on funding operational activities for development. We believe it will be important, in the course of further negotiations, not only to consider ways to ensure the stability and predictability of the resource base but also to monitor efficiency in spending.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): General Assembly resolution 48/162 is an important resolution, aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. Two years have now passed since that resolution was adopted, but to what extent has it been implemented? Is there anything that needs to be stressed and reaffirmed or pursued and defended? And are there any areas for improvement and for problems to be solved? These are questions in the back of everyone's mind.

To be sure, Member States of the United Nations, relevant United Nations organs, agencies of the United Nations system, and the Secretariat have all put an immense effort into carrying out the provisions of the resolution, and these efforts are given due recognition in the report of the Secretary-General. The practice and experience of the past two years, however, have enabled us to see that there are some problems too, and it is in this context that the Chinese delegation would like to make the following observations.

First, with regard to the purpose of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations, we believe that one of the most important elements of resolution 48/162 is the reaffirmation of the purpose of the restructuring exercise as promoting international economic cooperation for development, especially sustained growth and sustainable economic development in developing countries.

In other words, it is imperative that the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs, and the Secretariat take appropriate measures to keep in step with the times and to break out of the present impasse on issues of development so that positive contributions can be made to meeting the development needs of the developing countries. Only by faithfully adhering to and abiding by this basic premise can the United Nations truly fulfil the functions entrusted to it by the Charter and meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

At a time when globalization of the world economy and the interdependence of nations are on the increase, when linkages between economic, social and environment issues are strengthening and when global problems cannot be reliably and effectively solved by anyone single-handedly, enlightened and far-sighted leadership, correct guidance, an integrated and coordinated approach and strong support on the part of the United Nations have become all the more important, indeed urgent, for multilateral economic cooperation and the development of the developing countries.

But there is a major paradox — namely, that amid the mounting calls in the international community for a greater United Nations role in multilateral economic cooperation, forces that wish to arbitrarily divorce United Nations responsibilities from the development needs of our time and to weaken its functions and organs in the economic field are also at work at full throttle.

As a result, the United Nations has not been able to enjoy a free hand in providing policy guidance and coordination on macroeconomic and core economic matters, and it has also been frustrated and hamstrung in its effort to achieve the goal of international cooperation for development for the nineties and beyond. This is a cause of great concern and puzzlement.

We believe that it is contrary to the purpose of restructuring and to the tide of history to deny or weaken the role of the United Nations in the economic field, and that doing so will have serious consequences. It is necessary to resist and oppose this trend; otherwise our restructuring exercise may go in two diametrically opposed directions and the United Nations will not be able to play its due role in correctly addressing and solving development questions in the new historical context.

Secondly, with regard to principles for restructuring and revitalization, resolution 48/162 has reiterated the importance of addressing all issues in the spirit enshrined in the United Nations Charter and on the basis of the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States.

As for how the role of the United Nations in the economic and social fields should be strengthened, views and positions were different in the past, just as they are different today and just as they will be in the future. This is natural, and is to be expected. But the question is whether we should base ourselves on the mandates of the General Assembly and the merits of each case or on subjective preferences, likes and dislikes; whether we should make our choices on the basis of the collective will of Member States or on the basis of the interests and needs of individual countries. This is a question that must be faced squarely and addressed in a serious manner.

We are of the view that as the world's most representative intergovernmental international organization, composed of 185 countries Members, the United Nations, in carrying out its work in general or its restructuring measures in particular, should always take the overall interests of all Member States as both its point of departure and its ultimate goal and should base itself on the duties and responsibilities specified in the Charter and the objectives and tasks agreed on in relevant resolutions and at important international conferences. Only by concerted efforts to keep up with the demands of Member States at large and by adapting to the changing times can the work of the United Nations proceed in depth with long-lasting and effective results.

To set the tone of the work of the United Nations and its restructuring in pursuit of one's own political wishes and vested interests in disregard of the will and choice of the majority of Member States is in contravention of the spirit enshrined in the Charter and the principles established by the relevant General Assembly resolutions. It is also at odds with the democratization of international relations.

As far as the United Nations is concerned, observing the principles of the sovereign equality of Member States and democracy in international relations in seeking common ground and following what is correct on the basis of mutual respect and through broad-based, active and constructive consultations represents a guarantee for formulating sound, comprehensive and correct policies. Whether we are talking about the implementation of resolution 48/162 or other reforms, this is something that must be emphasized and borne in mind.

Thirdly, it seems to be a cliché that resources for operational activities for development ought to increase. But this cliché happens to hold the key to the revitalization and reform of the United Nations. It is also an issue that is quite urgent. In the past two years, certain parts of resolution 48/162 have not been implemented in earnest. And while negotiations on the increase of resources for operational activities have gone nowhere, the level of core resources has seen a steady decline. What is worse is the tendency to resort to the tactic of financially starving the United Nations at this juncture to force a reduction of mandated programmes and a change in priorities, and to attach all kinds of political strings to development aid that tie the hands of recipient countries. In this context, we cannot but register our strong concern and disapproval.

We believe that increasing resources for operational activities for development is a serious political question, a question of whether relevant General Assembly resolutions carry any authority and whether we take seriously our responsibility with respect to the historical mission of the United Nations and to international cooperation for development. Member States, developed countries in particular, need to take a correct position and make the right choice on this question. There is no room for equivocation or retrogression.

In our view, a speedy recovery from the critical situation of depleting resources requires, first and foremost, that the developed countries honour their political commitments by increasing substantially their contributions to resources on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, especially their official development assistance. Attempts to solve the resource problem by trimming United Nations functions in economic and technical cooperation or shifting responsibilities and obligations to developing countries are unacceptable to us because, instead of contributing to the fundamental solution of the problem, they will only distort the real meaning of multilateral economic and technical cooperation and increase pressure and difficulties for developing countries, thereby creating new obstacles to the new global partnership and international cooperation for development.

The effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council's consideration of its agenda items and its coordination work need to be enhanced through procedural adjustments in the organization of its work, on which the representative of the Philippines has already set out his views and proposals on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We hope that our deliberations here will lead to more vigorous and effective implementation of resolution 48/162 and will open up bright new vistas in the work of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

Mr. Muthaura (Kenya): Let me at the outset associate my delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/50/697) on progress in the restructuring and revitalization of the Organization in the economic, social and related fields, as mandated by the General Assembly in resolutions 45/264 and 48/162.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation of the progress made so far in respect of restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. This is an agenda item that has been under consideration for some time. While we acknowledge that there has been some progress in the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in these areas, the revitalization process should be given new impetus. Kenya attaches great importance to this item, as we believe that an efficient and effective United Nations system can contribute significantly to economic growth and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries. In this regard, my delegation would like to address certain areas that require consideration and attention.

The streamlining of United Nations funds, programmes, commissions and standing committees should be undertaken with a view to improving their efficiency, productivity and ability to respond flexibly to existing and emerging situations. It is my delegation's belief that restructuring and revitalization do not require radical transformation, but rather the strengthening and modification of the structures and organs to enhance their effectiveness and responsiveness. It is equally important to realize that restructuring alone cannot accomplish much in the area of socio-economic development without a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of the developing countries, as called for in resolution 48/162.

It is disappointing however, that there has so far been no progress on the exploration of new funding modalities for operational activities for development. On the contrary, we continue to see declining levels of core resources to fund the activities of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The political will to forge a realistic dialogue to identify a funding system and mechanisms to generate a substantial increase in resources on a predictable, continued and assured basis is essential for this exercise.

Leadership in the promotion of international cooperation in the economic, social and related fields is an obligation that the Charter imposes on the General Assembly. In its decisions and activities, the Organization should continue to uphold the principles of universality, sovereignty and multilateralism. Its organs and subsidiary machinery and other agencies within the system — particularly those in the economic, social and related fields — should be strengthened to provide effective follow-up to the programmes of action agreed at the recent international conferences.

Although various reform measures in the economic, social and related fields have been undertaken through a variety of past resolutions, the Economic and Social Council has yet to attain the goals envisaged in the Charter. The Council's role in respect of policy guidance to the United Nations development system and coordination and monitoring of development activities is crucial, and it needs to be enhanced.

It is in this light that the working methods of the Economic and Social Council must be further examined by the General Assembly in the context of the high-level, coordination, operational activities and general segments. My delegation agrees that the working methods of these four segments of the Council should be such that their roles are complementary and mutually reinforcing and that the final outcome is action-oriented. The high-level, coordination and operational activities segments should therefore end their sessions with agreed conclusions, to enable the general segment to concentrate on the conclusions and recommendations from the Council's subsidiary bodies and to identify issues that require decisions by the Council.

The subsidiary machinery in the economic, social and related fields is vital to the attainment of sustainable development. It is imperative that the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions be coordinated and harmonized, through clear division of labour and clear policy guidance, to avoid duplication. In this respect, the Council should delineate responsibilities with clear recommendations to the General Assembly. To this end, the regional commissions should be given more responsibility in respect of development activities. There is therefore a need to strengthen these bodies in terms of personnel and other resources.

As regards the composition of the functional commissions, my delegation is of the view that the membership should be increased to 53, in view of the increased number of States Members of the United Nations. This would ensure transparency and the participation of a proportionate number of Member States in the Organization's decisions on economic and social development.

It is encouraging to note the ongoing efforts to enhance policy dialogue and cooperation between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization with a view to fostering development activities. The need for integration and coordination of the development policies of the United Nations and of all the specialized agencies is paramount. Such integration and coordination must be pursued with the common objective of eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.